LARGE FARMS,

RECOMMENDED IN A NATIONAL VIEW.

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A REPLY

TO

MR. WRIGHT'S

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC

ON THE

MONOPOLY

OF

SMALL FARMS.

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LARGE FARMS,

RECOMMENDED IN A NATIONAL VIEW.

HAVING lately met with Mr. Wright's addreſs to the public on the monopoly of ſmall farms; an addreſs written on a ſubject of importance; as upon his plan a ſociety is actually forming for the purpoſe of reducing the ſize of farms; and as his pamphlet appears to me to be founded on miſconception and miſtatement; I feel it a duty that I owe to the public, (eſpecially as he writes on that ſide of the queſtion which, at preſent, is

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extremely popular) to hold out an antidote, to what, in my opinion, is of a malignant tendency.

Mr. W's premiſes are undoubtedly founded on errour, and therefore I ſhall take the liberty of denying his whole proceſs.

He begins with a general aſſertion that the monopoly, or accumulation of ſmall farms is the principal cauſe of the preſent ſcanty ſupply of proviſions. He attempts to demonſtrate this, by pointing out the injurious accumulation of three farmers in three particular pariſhes in Hertfordſhire. Theſe three farmers, he ſays, tho' holding the land of twenty-four perſons, do not produce more ſtock than any three of the twenty-four ſmall farmers before produced, "by which means is loſt to the community, the benefit of the ſtock produced on twenty-one farms." Mr. Wright here drops the term *proviſion*, and

and ſubſtitutes that of *ſtock*, as better ſuiting his purpoſe: but I cannot allow him to get rid of the word proviſion, for the community looks up to the farmer not merely for ſtock, but, what is of equal conſequence, for all kinds of grain, hay, vegetables, &c. Now I inſiſt upon it, that if one of theſe large farmers raiſes a greater quantity of proviſions than eight of the ſmall farmers raiſed on the ſame land when in a ſeparate ſtate, that the community does not experience a loſs by this monopoly of ſmall farms. Corn is undoubtedly as neceſſary to the ſuſtenance of man, as ſtock, and large ſtock more neceſſary than ſmall. Mr. Wright has entirely omitted the quantum of corn raiſed by each claſs, and has laid peculiar ſtreſs upon ſmall ſtock, as if the man, that affords a duck or a chicken for the conſumption of the public, was equally ſerviceable to ſociety, as he, that brings a ſheep or an ox to market. It will be no difficult matter, I think, to prove, that

the large farmers will raiſe more corn and ſheep than the ſmall farmer, per acre, where the ground is favourable to this ſyſtem of huſbandry. In every part of the kingdom he will certainly produce more proviſions of one kind or other, if we allow the large farmer to be equal in ſkill with the ſmall one, (which in general cannot be denied, for nine times in ten, the ſkill is in favour of the former) and the power of making the moſt of the land is always with the large farmer. This I ſhall endeavour to ſhew bye and bye in my further review of Mr. Wright's book. I cannot admit, therefore, that a diviſion of the kingdom into ſmall farms, would remove from us all future apprehenſions of a ſcanty ſupply of proviſions. But I can tell Mr. Wright what would have this happy effect. Make every farmer in the kingdom a good one, and we ſhould ſoon render the importation of foreign corn unneceſſary. I am confident, that if all the cultivated land in

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the kingdom was under the management of good farmers, that the annual produce of Great Britain would be one third, at leaſt, more than it is at preſent; and would be amply ſufficient for the conſumption of its inhabitants. It is generally allowed that we conſume annually ſix million quarters of wheat; and I believe it will not be denied, that we never raiſe leſs than five million; if, therefore, the extenſion of farms will give us the preſumed addition of one third of the above quantity, the product will more than anſwer the demand. By a *good farmer*, I do not here mean a book-farmer, nor one that is to exhibit wonders by the adoption of ſome late diſcovery in agriculture; I only mean one that acts rationally and ſeaſonably upon the beſt eſtabliſhed ſyſtem of the county in which he reſides.

But by what means ſhall we make every farmer a *good one?* Certainly not by placing him

him in a ſituation in which he cannot make the moſt of his land. Certainly not by making him poor. Certainly not by confining him within the compaſs of fifty acres.

I ſhall give ſome reaſons for the above aſſertions or rather negations.

The ſmall farmer, in many inſtances, falls under the ſame expences with the large farmer. In many inſtances, he is ſubject to inconveniences which the large farmer does not experience. He is ſubject to the ſame expence of attending the market, if he wants to purchaſe only one beaſt, as the large farmer who buys twenty; and having but little buſineſs there, he has more time to ſpend in the alehouſe; the conſequence of which I need not mention. The farmer who occupies only fifty acres, and part of it arable, is under the neceſſity of keeping a team of three or four horſes; (oxen unfortunately do not

not ſuit him); but this number of horſes is ſufficient for a farm of one hundred acres. If, therefore, the farmer on fifty acres gives a full rent for his land, and labours not only under the inconvenience of an overſtock of horſes, but many others, he of courſe becomes poor; and then what good can he do to his land, to himſelf, the proprietor, or the public? The poor farmer does every thing in fetters. He is under the neceſſity of purchaſing ſtock, but it muſt be low-priced; it muſt be inferior ſtock, which is generally unproductive. To buy freſh ſeed for his land is too expenſive, and therefore he ſows his own degenerated grain year after year. By this means he frequently loſes one half of his crop. When his rent day is approaching, (I grant Mr. W.) he muſt then thraſh out his corn, whether it is in thraſhing order or not; whether he can uſe his ſtraw or not; whether he neglects his other buſineſs or not; and muſt ſell it, whether the

the market wants it or not. This neceſſity is one of the rotten ſtones, on which Mr. W. has founded his attack on the large farmers, and on which he is about to erect his novel inſtitution.

But to proceed in my examination of his addreſs.

Mr. Wright, page 4, ſays, "By this mode of monopolizing, if twenty-one ſmall farms are deſtroyed, &c." What can Mr. W. mean by *deſtroyed?* He cannot mean annihilated; he cannot mean uncultivated; for he allows page 6, that theſe *deſtroyed* or large farms "produce the greateſt quantity of grain and hay;" and if they produce grain and hay, they produce proviſions or what is of equal value. Taking this deſtruction for granted, he adds, "it is evident that one hundred and five perſons, or twenty-five families, are deprived of the means of com-

comfortable ſubſiſtence, and their induſtrious exertions, for the benefit of the community are at an end." That theſe twenty-one farms are cultivated without labourers is an abſurd ſuppoſition; and if they are cultivated by labourers, they are cultivated by perſons that ſubſiſt upon them, and by perſons that muſt have as comfortable a ſubſiſtence, as any ſmall farmer that cannot pay his rent, and whoſe only certain proſpect is, the ſeizure of his cattle and implements of huſbandry, or a priſon. For I preſume that the non-payment of rent or the miſmanagement of land are the cauſes of the diſmiſſal of theſe and other ſmall tenants. For I hope there are not many landlords, that would diſmiſs them for leſs reaſons than theſe.

Page 5, " We experience this loſs in a higher degree at the preſent moment than ever before known." Certainly, there was in the year 1795 an alarming deficiency,

and a greater ſcarcity of corn than has of late years been experienced. But for this ſcarcity Mr. W. and I aſſign very different or rather oppoſite cauſes. I aſſert confidently, that if the whole of the kingdom had, for ſome years back, been in the hands of large farmers, we ſhould never have known the late ſcarcity. Under our preſent bad management of land, in the beſt of years, we cannot feed ourſelves, we depend too much upon a ſupply from abroad; and that ſupply, from a variety of cauſes, having of late failed, the late enormous prices were the conſequence.

Page 6, "The wealthy farmer's attention" ſays Mr. W. "is engroſſed by the means of producing the greateſt quantity of grain and hay." And can his attention be turned to objects of greater public utility? Do not theſe articles in a great meaſure regulate the price of ſtock? But he adds, that

that this is done with a view "to lay them up in ſtore till he can take advantage of the higheſt market price." Would he be prudent if he did not? Does not every man ſtrive to make the moſt of his property? Do not "the wealthy inhabitants of London, thoſe generous hearts" ſays Mr. W. "who can feel for thoſe who cannot help themſelves" do not even they, in their line hold back or ſell as ſuits their intereſt? I cannot help ſuſpecting from the above words of Mr. W. that his addreſs was written entirely ad captandum.

"The middling and poor farmer," ſays Mr. W., "not only attends to the production of grain and hay, but alſo to the rearing of ſtock; all which his needs compel him to carry to market as ſoon and as often as poſſible." This is the farmer that Mr. W., delights in, only keep him poor enough and he will keep his land poor enough, and

the little that he does produce, will generally be brought forward to depreſs a falling market, ſeldom to check a riſing one. This farmer will make only half as much, per acre, of his land, as the wealthy farmer. He cannot ſtock his land; conſequently cannot be a good farmer. Therefore, if the whole kingdom was in the hands of ſuch farmers, we ſhould never know a permanent plenty. For let us ſuppoſe all the farmers in the kingdom poor, and under the neceſſity of bringing their produce to market, immediately after harveſt. At this time we ſhould have abundance, we ſhould waſte. But where ſhould we look for a ſupply at Midſummer? We ſhould then be entirely in the power of merchants and importers, whom we ſhould find equally "hard-hearted" with "the monopolizing farmer."

Page 7, "The rich farmer's wife is above the drudgery of looking after pigs, geeſe, fowls,

fowls, &c. The poor farmer's wife thinks theſe her treaſures, nouriſhes them till they bring fourfold, and then adds their produce to her huſband's ſtore." Pigs, I grant, as far as they can be ſupported without devouring much corn, are profitable ſtock; but the farmer's wife, who throws away much of her time, and much of her huſband's corn, in feeding of geeſe fowls &c. neither conſults her own intereſt nor the benefit of the community. For, it frequently happens, that the ſmall farmer's wife, after having "nouriſhed" a couple of fowls with four ſhillings worth of corn, may, by "waiting for the higheſt market price," ſell them for three ſhillings; and then ſhe "adds their produce to her huſband's ſtore." On moſt farms, (on a dairy one in particular,) the induſtrious wife may find much better employ, than in feeding poultry. I am convinced, that where more fowls are kept than can be ſupported with what they find at the barn doors,

doors, that ſuch *ſtock* is unprofitable. It is trifling and unworthy of Mr. W. to lay ſo much ſtreſs, upon this unſubſtantial part of proviſions, as if the ſecond courſe was of more conſequence to an Engliſhman than his bread, his beef, or his beer. If poultry muſt be had, let thoſe raiſe and ſupport them, who find ſuch delicacies eſſential to their happineſs.

Page 7, The next thing (on which Mr. W. reckons much) is an egregious miſcalculation. "On a farm of one hundred and ſixty acres, which I was at laſt year, was the following ſtock, viz. eighty ſheep, five cows, two calves, twenty-ſeven hogs and pigs, ſeventy fowls, twenty-three ducks, in all two hundred and ſeven, beſides a number of pigeons." Now if this farm of one hundred and ſixty acres produces two hundred and ſeven head of ſtock, then every one of the other farms, according to his aſſertion (ſome of which he allows

allows conſiſts only of fifty acres), ought to give two hundred and ſeven; or that a farm of fifty acres ought to produce as much ſtock, as a farm of one hundred and ſixty acres. But, allowing this calculation of Mr. W's. to be juſt, what does it prove? It only preſumes that the ſmall farms, kept in a ſeparate ſtate, would have raiſed a more *numerous* ſtock, but not a greater quantity of human food. Beſides, the perſon brought forward, as a model for imitation, cannot properly be called a farmer, you may call him a ſwineherd, or poulterer, if you pleaſe, farmer he cannot be; for who ever heard of a farmer keeping twenty-ſeven hogs, where only five cows were kept, and ſeventy fowls and twenty-three ducks, where there is not a poſſibility of raiſing much grain. Mr. W. in this, and every other inſtance, has omitted the number of *horſes* kept. He has not told us whether theſe farmers uſe oxen or horſes, which is a very material conſideration.

Page 8, Now if we calculate, ſays Mr. W., "we ſhall find a loſs of ſtock, to the community, of four thouſand four hundred and forty-ſeven (food for a vaſt number of perſons)." To this, I anſwer, that I do not know theſe monopolizing farmers but I am confident that their landlord, or landlords, can give very ſatisfactory reaſons, why they choſe to have three tenants inſtead of twenty-four; and that theſe tenants, if they were aſked, would convince any unprejudiced perſon that they now raiſe more *proviſions*, and employ as many of his majeſty's ſubjects, as the land before gave labour and ſuſtenance to, unleſs the land is turned to grazing, which does not appear from Mr. W's ſtatement. The large farmer, it ſhould be conſidered, acts upon an extenſive ſcale and improved ſyſtem which the purſe of the ſmall farmer cannot reach. According to his ſituation he will dreſs his land with marl, chalk, lime, ſea-manure, or whatever is within compaſs; and this muſt

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create additional labour, this muſt give abundantly more proviſions for the market.

Page 8, Mr. W. adds, "Indeed it is deſireable to aſcertain the magnitude of the monopolizing evil, and I hope ſhortly to attain it." And I write this, partly as a cautionary hint to him, not to ſtalk abroad (to uſe his own language) and to trample under foot experience and common ſenſe in his future inveſtigation. Let him aſk any ſmall farmer in the kingdom, any one of his own favourite farmers, whether he can make as much per acre of his land as he could do, if he occupied twice the quantity, and the anſwer will be invariably—no.

Page 9, Mr. W. propoſes two ways to put a ſtop to further monopoly of this kind. The firſt is the interference of the legiſlature. But I preſume that our legiſlators will have more wiſdom than to act in a

manner ſo arbitrary and ſo much againſt their own intereſt and the good of the nation. They are poſſeſſors of land, which, they find it advantageous, to let out in large farms. And why? Becauſe the ſmall farmer neither pays his rent nor cultivates his land ſo well as the large farmer.

The ſecond method of removing this ſuppoſed evil of Mr. W's is the eſtabliſhment of a ſociety for the purpoſe of purchaſing large eſtates and dividing them into ſmall farms, and letting them on leaſe or otherwiſe. Two meetings, I find, have been held at the London Tavern to forward the formation of this ſociety, but I have not learnt the reſult. As however I think this ſociety if carried into effect, will prove prejudicial to the nation in proportion to its extent, I feel it my duty immediately to lay before the members of this ſociety and the public ſuch arguments in oppoſition to their plan as occur to me on the

the inſtant, diſregarding all ornaments of ſtyle and arrangement of matter.

Page 10, "On public notice being given that they had ſmall farms to diſpoſe of, numerous applications would be made for them." And he adds, "It is in the power of many farmers to give their ſons money ſufficient to ſtock a ſmall farm when they cannot do it for a large one." That abundant applications would in this caſe be made there is no doubt; but theſe applications would not be made by the farmer's ſons only. It too frequently happens that the higheſt rent is offered for a ſmall farm by a tradeſman, a mechanic, a publican, a gentleman's upper ſervant; and ſometimes a labourer, who has been induſtrious and fortunate enough to ſave a few pounds, will engage in a farm which he cannot ſtock. Let almoſt any one of the above have their land rent-free and they will neither do good to themſelves nor ſervice to

the community. Indeed, if the farmer's ſon is not able to ſtock land enough to give him room for a regular courſe of crops of all kinds of grain, it were better for him to remain under his father's roof.

Page 11, Mr. W. ſays, "That proportion of ground monopolized into one large farm, which now only ſupports five or ten perſons, &c." Did any one ever, before this, hear of ſeven hundred or eight hundred acres being cultivated by a family of five or ten perſons? Mr. W. has not here even the ſhadow of probability to ſupport the weighty concluſions which he draws from hence.

Page 13, "I ſincerely hope" ſays Mr. W. "one of the objects of the Board of Agriculture will be to divide the waſte lands into ſmall farms." In this, I truſt, Mr. W. will be diſappointed, for the Board of Agriculture, he will find, will be ſtrongly attached to a regular

regular ſyſtem of huſbandry, complete in its parts, (comprehending all kinds of grain and winter crops) which cannot be executed on one of Mr. W's farms of fifty acres. Beſides if land is to be incloſed for ſmall farms it muſt be divided into fields proportionally ſmall. And will Mr. W. ſay there is no loſs of land from the multiplicity of fences in ſmall incloſures? Will he affirm that land, under the ſhade of trees and hedges, yields crops equal to the other parts of the field? or that the corn or graſs, that may grow there, is as nutritive as that which has felt the influence of the ſun and the circulation of air? Is he not aſſured that corn growing in ſmall incloſures is moſt liable to the mildew and blight? And is he not convinced that ſmall incloſures are unfavourable to the making of hay and the drying of corn after a continuance of rain? I can tell Mr. W. that the ſmall farmer is ſubject to theſe and many other inconveniences which do not affect

affect the large farmer, and which collectively conſidered, one would think, muſt turn the ſcale in favour of the latter, and check the ardour of ſuch a ſociety as that recommended by Mr. W.

Page 13, "For it matters not," ſays Mr. W. "how great ſoever the ſupply, if it falls into thoſe hands who are enabled to keep it till the price ſhall be equal to their avarice." For what purpoſe, let me aſk, does the farmer raiſe his crops? to ſave, or to ſell? Will he be imprudent enough to ſave when he knows there is "a great ſupply?" Or can he hope for an increaſe of price in ſuch a caſe? Let me tell Mr. W. that farmers in theſe days are not wanting in ſound ſenſe and diſcernment; they now begin to look forward as well as other people, and to exhibit as ſtrong proofs of the poſſeſſion of what is called *mind*, (and I think *feeling* too) as any

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inhabitant of Mark-lane or any other lane in the enlightened metropolis. And as for this avarice with which he loads them, that I ſay (if they do poſſeſs it in a greater degree than other men) would induce them accordingly to take the firſt opportunity of ſelling, when they have no proſpect of gain by holding back. It is only at the time of real or apparent ſcarcity that any man except a madman will ſpeculate and hoard up. Suppoſe all the large farmers in the kingdom were wealthy enough to hold back their corn till they had two year's crops in their rick-yards, would they ſtill dare to ſpeculate and retain, when they are ſenſible from what they experienced in the month of April laſt, that importation alone can in a few weeks ſink the price of wheat from fifteen ſhillings a buſhel to eight? Beſides, they muſt poſſeſs a capital of more than ſixteen millions ſterling to engroſs. Wheat alone, ſince the

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conſumption of Great Britain in that article exceeds that amount, even at ſeven ſhillings per buſhel.

Mr. W. then adds "beſides, they will not raiſe that quantity of proviſions which would fall to the community from the induſtry of the little farmer." This every farmer in the kingdom great and ſmall will deny. Mr. W. talks much of the induſtry of the little farmers, but for this talent they are not remarkably conſpicuous. I have ſeen them much more ſtrongly attached to the chimney-corner, than the large farmer, who, tho' he does not join in the manual part of huſbandry, yet takes care that others labour, and does not let ſlip *times* and *ſeaſons*. I know ſeveral pariſhes in different counties, tho' greater parts of which are in farms of between forty and a hundred acres; and theſe farmers tho' in general they keep four,

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ſome five horſes (enough to devour half the produce of their land) are almoſt always late and ſlovenly, ſeldom catch the critical ſeaſon of either ploughing or ſowing, on which almoſt every thing depends. And in harveſt the ſmall farmer is very unfortunately ſituated, for the large farmer has the command of all the labourers, becauſe he employs them in the winter.

Page 15, "From which it ſhould ſeem, that incloſures have been injurious to the peaſantry." In this as in moſt other points Mr. Wright and I are perfectly at iſſue. I ſay, that the ſtock, now kept upon the waſte, conſiſts of uſeleſs horſes and diminutive cattle. Theſe indeed are kept alive during ſummer, but in winter bring an expence upon their owners generally equal, ſometimes greater than their worth. A ſmall allotment to the poor for garden-ground, will be of much

more real uſe to them than the great privilege they now claim of turning or rather ſtarving cattle on the waſte.

Mr. W. and I are ſpeaking of farming in an extended, public, national view, and on this ground, I ſay, that no farm ſhould be leſs than three hundred acres, nor more in good incloſed land than ſix hundred, in poor land or part unincloſed, eight hundred acres.

I can aſſure Mr. W. that I am totally impartial in what I have written, that I am no farmer monopolizer or jobber, but ſpeak "from facts," as he ſays he does "in general" and "ſuch circumſtances as come within my knowledge," and from obſervations, not of a particular diſtrict in Hertfordſhire, or in the neighbourhood of the poultry-loving metropolis, but from obſervation of the beſt

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corn counties in the kingdom, beſt cultivated, and from obſervation of the poverty of the people and the country where ſmall pittances are portioned out to the farmer.

FINIS.

ERRATUM.

Page 24, line 3, from bottom, for *tho'* read *the*.